

# ***The Library Assistant***

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## ***Conference***

ONE'S first reaction to the Library Association Conference in London was one of anti-climax; subsequent reflection recalled certain highlights appropriate to the occasion, but the overall impression remains. Few of the sessions seemed in any way conclusive or purposive; the proceedings seem doomed to oblivion in the memory of those present.

The anniversary had very properly been taken as an opportunity to invite many eminent overseas librarians, whose presence was both welcome and stimulating: one would have wished that they had been given more time in which to contribute to the deliberations, so that we might have had the benefit of their opinions as well as their felicitations. The crisp courtesy of the Royal President's distinguished deputy, and his apparent familiarity with our problems, gave pleasure to all who attended, and the three morning sessions were all pleasant occasions, managed efficiently. The sectional meetings in the afternoon effectively split the conference into more homogeneous groups, on a basis of seriousness of purpose on Tuesday, special interest on Wednesday, and mental age on Thursday.

The evenings were a strangely assorted succession. Harry Roy's asymmetrical smile seemed an appropriate comment on the incongruity of Monday's inaugural social evening; H.M. Government's reception on Tuesday gained immeasurably from the charming informality of Lord and Lady Mountbatten's omnipresence; the City of London's reception on Wednesday was an acceptable recognition of the occasion, well-attended and quite successful in the feudal atmosphere of the Guildhall, with civic gold plate, resplendent and barbaric, on show, and the Royal Artillery orchestra discoursing from a dais.

The bus strike prevented the A.A.L. Dance on Thursday from becoming too crowded, and provided younger members with a pleasantly convivial event after the exactions of the previous three days. Concurrently, the speeches at the Annual Dinner at the Dorchester underlined the ungeometrical fact that a point may have breadth, but not length. The Annual General Meeting passed off with more than the customary discussion: the Chairman, fortunately, had less preoccupation with Bradshaw than some of his predecessors. Council's motion to raise registration fees was defeated rather by its own supporters than by the strength of the case against it, though a number of authority representatives were touched by the appeals

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on behalf of those members unable to attend and vote.

The unexpected and unheralded provided most of the memorabilia—Miss Colwell's limpid introduction of the Carnegie Medal winner to Lord Mountbatten; some good anecdotes during the afternoon sessions; the embarrassing succession of gifts to the Association from overseas librarians; the size of the audience attracted to the A.A.L. session, at which Mr. Clough's paper touched on many themes, but left most of the conclusions to be drawn by his hearers.

Some personal conclusions arising from the conference are that, firstly, if we invite overseas colleagues, we should offer them something more than hospitality; the cause of world librarianship would gain considerably from their participation in discussions resulting in joint action; secondly, the library service, both directly and indirectly (through publicity resulting in public awareness) would be improved by having as a theme for future conferences some urgent, challenging problem, to which all papers and discussions should be related, and on which might be formulated recommendations and agreements for subsequent local ratification and implementation. There are subjects enough and to spare. Thirdly, such discussions would gain in value from being the centralised expression of conclusions framed by Branches: this would involve prediscussion regionally and should result in a greater interest by chiefs and authority members in local meetings?

As it is, some 1,600 people, 100 from overseas, attended the London conference this year. For what?

### *Council Notes*

**W**HEN the Council met under the chairmanship of Mr. F. C. Tighe on September 14th, one of the many points made in the course of various discussions in Council and committees was that some members were under the impression that the Association was administered by Chief Librarians. This is so fantastic that a list of those members who attended the Council may serve the double purpose of disproving the suggestion and at the same time informing the membership at large who their representatives are. In addition to the President and the Honorary Officers were present Miss Baker (Midlands), Miss Edwards (Bristol), Miss Martin (Education Secretary), Miss Paterson (Midlands), Miss Williams (North Wales), Miss Willson (National), Mr. Arden (Manchester), Mr. Boulter (Eastern), Mr. Brett (Liverpool), Mr. Broome (Membership Secretary), Mr. Carver (National), Mr. Chesshyre (Manchester), Mr. Corbett (National), Mr. Davies (South Wales), Mr. Ferry (North Eastern), Mr. Genn (Yorkshire), Mr. Howes (Greater London), Mr. McPeake (Wessex), Mr. Martin (Education Secretary), Mr. Paget (Kent), Mr. Parsonage (Liverpool), Mr. Phillips (National), Mr. Richards (Devon), Mr. Rowsell (South Eastern), Mr. Rye (Publications Officer), Mr. Sharr (National), Mr. Shaw (Greater London), Mr. Shepherd (North Eastern), Mr. Stockham (East Midlands), Mr. Taylor (Yorkshire) and Mr. Tomlinson (Greater London). Miss Woolley (National) was, unfortunately, too ill to attend and Mr. Whatley (Midlands) was represented by Miss Paterson. And of these who are Chief Librarians? One

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only—the Vice-President, Mr. R. F. Drewery, who had that month been appointed Chief Librarian of Hull. The Council congratulated Mr. Drewery most warmly and he replied that as a result of his new appointment he felt unable to continue to hold office or serve on the Council of the Association after the end of the year.

It was reported that arrangements for the 1951 Conference were well in hand and it would take place at Manchester from 6th to 8th April. The theme of "The Library Assistant—his recruitment, training and welfare" was agreed to and full details will be announced before the end of this year.

The Council decided that the present Honorary Secretary, Mr. E. A. Clough, should be appointed President for 1951 in place of Mr. Drewery, the Vice-President, who is unable to serve, and that Mr. Corbett be appointed Vice-President.

Committees started their proceedings at 10 a.m., and the Service and Conditions Committee considered the present position of the negotiations affecting the grading of library assistants under the jurisdiction of the National Joint Council and went on to consider the proposed investigation into welfare and working conditions of library assistants in both public and non-public libraries.

The Education Committee dealt with their many problems of standard courses, checking students' papers, the appointment of tutors and complaints concerning the latest Library Association examination papers. At the same time the Press and Publications Committee were learning that the *A.A.L. Guide* had been reprinted and that the *A.A.L. Reprints* had just been published. New works were considered and the publishing programme reviewed. The Finance and General Purposes Committee received a report from the Honorary Treasurer that the balance of the General Fund had been reduced to below £50—a quite inadequate balance for an Association with a membership of 6,268.

On a member's need being brought to notice, the Benevolent Fund Subcommittee recommended that a grant of £25 be made, and this was approved.

There was the usual routine business to transact before the Council finished at five o'clock. They meet again on November 2nd.

E.A.C.

### ***The Salary of the Public Library Assistant***

THE ANNUAL General Meeting of NALGO recently decided that the present freezing of wages should be ended and that the payment for work done should be more fairly related to both the responsibility carried and the rising cost of living.

NALGO have started an enquiry at branch level into the effect of the present rates of pay on the efficiency and the standard of living of the local government officer. It is anticipated that as a result of this enquiry they will be able to substantiate their claims and command public support.

At a time when the wage structure of our society appears to be based on the theory that those who make the most noise are the most deserving it would be foolish of us to hold back our very reasonable demands for an adequate wage. The Council of the Association of Assistant Librarians

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hope that all members will co-operate actively in this NALGO enquiry and bring to their branch representatives' notice all cases of hardship or loss of staff directly attributable to the present level of wages in local government.

E.A.C.

### *The Architecture of Libraries*

E. MAXWELL FRY

**L**IBRARY DESIGN is passing through something of a crisis and its main premises need clarifying. The crisis is one familiar in other spheres and concerns the spiritual interpretation of scientific method.

In early libraries the storage of books was secondary to the architectural celebration of their collection, as may be realised by comparing the architectural spaces of the Gibbs' Radcliffe Camera Library, Oxford, or Wren's Trinity Library, Cambridge, with the number of books housed. As the storage habit grew, stack room space exceeded architectural space, and the two became separated, as in the Cambridge Library where reading and reference rooms are fed by mechanical means from a still larger volume of stackrooms conceived as a mechanical aggregation of book storage.

The mechanical-functional conception of a library is reinforced by recent designs in the United States—such as the Lamont Library extensions at Harvard, and even more so in recent projects on a modular system for other universities there.

The basis of this conception is the common bookstack dimension; the aim is flexibility of use, and particularly future use; the demon is air-conditioning; and the danger is, that interpreting the unit dimension and the idea of flexibility with too great an enthusiasm for the mechanics of the thing, some of the functions of a library may be lost.

The idea of flexibility has a fatal fascination for many people. It has intoxicated us architects. The thesis is that we live in a world changing so rapidly on account of our nearly godlike fertility of scientific invention that really we cannot commit ourselves to say what we will be doing the day after to-morrow; what new wonder we will not have given birth to.

Furthermore, and this is the architects' fatal pride, we have a constructive fertility to match, and by taking thought we evolve machine-like structures in which each part being entirely similar and ruled to a module, all are interchangeable, adaptable, replaceable, and subject to the mutations of our modern intelligences, the delicate graduations of our sensitive minds! As a thesis this is more intoxicating than "function."

But let me give you two warning examples. I was being shown by the architect a concert hall in the most modern radio building on the continent. "See," he said, "these walls are made of separate panels moved by electricity to give just exactly the reverberation necessary to chamber music, voices, light orchestra and so on. They were adjusted two years ago for chamber music, and well, you know, no one has bothered to change them since."

It was proposed to provide new lighting and air conditioning for a famous national art gallery. A scheme was produced that directed light

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exactly where it was wanted on the pictures, that eliminated shadow, gave as good conditions by daylight as by artificial light, and was in fact scientifically perfect. But the proportions of the room were destroyed, the ceiling replaced by a mass of fins and blades, and one of the pleasures of being in a gallery where the architectural spaces were on the same scale as the pictures, was lost.

Man does not live by bread alone ; nor by music alone ; nor by books alone. Man absorbs knowledge through all his senses, consciously and unconsciously. He concentrates in little bursts on what interests him and then he relaxes ; and who can say when he learns best—when he concentrates, or when he relaxes.

The aim of knowledge is the whole man and the furnishing of the places of knowledge should be presentations of wholeness, aspects of architectural unity. The last thing they should be are sections of a library hive, though, if they were they would reflect fairly exactly the malign tendency of this age to sanctify some of the worst aspects of machine economy in the name of progress and as a cloak to poverty.

It is of the economy of the machine to repeat, but Nature is endlessly variable ; and man, her creature, delights in variety and contrast, light and shade. Nothing in our recent history has more depressed our spirit than the suppression in the name of democracy of the individual within the unidentified crowd.

If it is of the economy of the machine to repeat then repeat we must, but it should be neither the blind blood-beat of the tom-tom, nor the bloodless click-click of the machine. Repetition is used in art and music to establish rhythm, to bridge space between one effect and another, and to reinforce effect by comparison. We must, as artists, find rhythms arising out of our lives and connecting them with ultimate realities, and our use of the machine, our pursuit of its economy for our service, must stop exactly where its dead-beat interferes with the live rhythm we are in search of.

Therefore, when we come to design libraries, let us accept the multiple of the stack, and make it a module since it undoubtedly commands an important element of the structure. And let us fuse the division between the machine stack and the over-grandiose reading and reference rooms, to humanise the stack by reading in it, and to deflate the over-grandiose public rooms by merging them with the essential and contemporary structure.

But let us not creep into the stack entirely to live a cellular reading existence ; nor let the cellular structure of the stack so envelop the whole that every space is commanded by it and bears its dead modular stamp to the glory of the idea of storage and the defeat of whole knowledge.

### ***Travelling Libraries : Route Planning***

R. E. RICHARDS

THE post-war boom in travelling libraries is in full swing, but although considerable information on technical aspects is available from the authorities experimenting with this form of service, little has been

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recorded regarding the planning of the routes on which the vehicles will operate. It is, therefore, proposed to outline the methods used in one county area, and to indicate the problems that arise.

The preliminary surveying of routes will depend upon (a) the type of locality at which the service is aimed, and (b) the place of the travelling library service in the general policy for the whole area. In the example upon which this article is based, the whole county library area is divided into ten regions, and the travelling library service will likewise be decentralised to operate from the regional headquarters. The survey is therefore being carried out regionally. Service to scattered houses and farms, particularly those really isolated, is the first aim, with communities of less than 500 persons and the new, really large housing estates, as complementary, but later objectives. The service to communities of less than 500 will result in the closing of many existing service points, mainly in schools.

The choice of maps is fairly obvious: the 1 inch Ordnance Survey (6th ed.) is useful for a general view of the area to be covered, but is not sufficiently detailed in respect of buildings, names and parish boundaries; the 1: 25,000 (approx  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches to the mile) Ordnance Survey map is just right for the purpose of a detailed survey of this kind, particularly as names, roads and tracks stand out more clearly than on the 1 inch, with its closely packed and rather overwhelming detail. Both these maps bear the National Grid lines, and their use is referred to later. A word of warning when using the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inch maps: the carriageways are not differentiated except for roads classified as 1st and 2nd class by the Ministry of Transport, consequently a "road" as shown on these maps may be anything from a grass-grown lane, almost disused, to a metalled road equal to 2nd class in surface if not in width. This applies particularly to large farms having two approaches from different directions; on the map both appear equally good, but on the ground it will be found that one way has been preferred and has been correspondingly cared for, while the other has been neglected.

As a first step, the exact location of the branch libraries, service points for over 500 population and those for under 500 are put in on the maps, both 1 inch and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inch. Mutual boundaries with autonomous authorities may well be emphasised too, as this will help to define the area being surveyed. In the survey in question the county library regional boundaries, following parish boundaries, are put in, as it is desired to keep the travelling library service in each region independent and so avoid confusion of book-stock. It must be decided at this stage how many "halts" per day are to be made, and what the cycle of visits is to be—weekly, fortnightly or monthly. Thus, if it is decided that a cycle of nine different routes, each of approximately 25 "halts" is to be operated, then obviously the total number of points at which "halts" can be made will be 9 by 25. In practice, a rigid figure of so many "halts" per day is unrealistic, as obviously 25 "halts" spaced rather far apart in some instances may exceed the working day, whilst 30 "halts" close together may come well within it; the distance to be covered before the first "halt" is reached is a factor also, depending upon the suitability of the regional headquarters as an administrative centre for the region.

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With the foregoing data settled, one enters upon the treacherous fields of conjecture. What is the area "served" by such and such a service point? Is a farm isolated because it is sited upon the boundary of another library authority, although close to a large town? It soon becomes obvious that we are working in the dark, and that the more we speculate (short of a thorough-going investigation into shopping habits and transport), the more we flounder. Even if branch libraries keep a village by village record showing where their borrowers are drawn from, this is only partly helpful; what of the people who are not drawn to any branch, who are just the ones we are aiming to serve? Isolation is clearly a relative term, as is well illustrated by the following example: a request for service by the travelling library was received from a lady who lives about two miles from the boundary of a large borough, away from any village, and quite "isolated" as far as the county service is concerned; yet she lives within easy walking distance of a 20-minute bus service into the adjacent town. It is no new idea that where the library service is concerned the boundaries between adjoining authorities shall be ignored by mutual arrangement, but consideration of the best use of a travelling library drives home the fact that the more boundaries there are the more expensive it becomes to provide a good service.

Returning to our problem of "who is isolated," it is eventually necessary to make an arbitrary distinction, and then to apply it in a common-sense way. A square on the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inch map measures approximately 1,000 yards, and this may be taken as a convenient radius, outside of which any dwelling is isolated as far as library service is concerned.

The next step is to work over the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inch map, square by square, making a slip for each building marked, bearing the full name (prefixed by parish if thought necessary) and the Normal National Grid number. This Grid number will establish the position of any point within 100 yards on the ground, will prove a useful means of sorting the slips later, and may be the only way to describe exactly the many buildings which have no precise name—either on the map or in the knowledge of the inhabitants. Of course, "buildings" are not necessarily habitations; they may, in fact, be anything from a barn to a power-station, but this can only be discovered on the ground, and at the moment we are concerned that no possible "halts" shall be missed. When the area has been carefully covered (and it is surprising how easy it is to miss a single cottage at the edge of a wood), the slips are counted, and it can then be seen whether the number of vans allocated to the region, and the frequency with which they are to call, is sufficient to cope with the probable number of "halts." If these factors correspond, then all is plain sailing; if not, one may (a) increase the allocation of vans, (b) reduce the area to be served (either by postponing service to a slice of it until more vans are available, or by extending the imaginary sphere of influence of permanent service points above the 1,000 yards), or (c) reduce the frequency of calls. Whichever way is chosen, it is as well if the slips for places omitted are saved, so that reference can be made to them when someone not receiving a call fails to understand why his neighbour 200 yards away is visited. Some pruning of possible "halts" will be made later at the surveying stage, either because



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buildings turn out not to be habitations, or because they may be quite inaccessible in bad weather. But in practice this gain is usually discounted by the houses built since the map was revised, or by the unforeseeable extent of some buildings; farms, for instance, frequently include a pair of cottages in what, on the map, can be taken to be merely farm buildings. One more step to be taken in the office—the slips should be sorted into provisional routes, according to as convenient a geographical division of the region as can be made—and then out into the countryside to check the existence of the possible “halts” and to explore the difficulties of access.

It is at this stage that the envy of one's colleagues is aroused. “Just joy-riding around the countryside,” they taunt. Admittedly to anyone who is interested in the countryside and likes exploring, it is a welcome and unexpected change from library routine. But consider what has to be done: firstly, every place which has been noted must be visited, if at all possible, and frequently the degree of impossibility is not realised until turning back is out of the question and one finds oneself reversing from a narrow lane into a field, via a narrow gate, with no one to cry “Stop.” The probable state of the lane in winter is imagined (questioning the inhabitants is not very satisfactory), the turning space, overhanging trees and wires noted, gates opened and closed, and the object of one's visit explained where necessary. Reference to maps, often four at a time, is continuous, gear-changing incessant, reversing frequent. If, towards the end of the afternoon one cares little whether “Shaftholme Grange” still exists or not (it does on the map, but it is now a cowshed on the ground), it is understandable. But at this point all one's remaining curiosity and persistence must be summoned up, or something important may be missed. As an illustration of this, imagine a large colliery, clearly described as such on the map, surrounded on all sides by railway lines, the immediate approach confronting one a low, skew, railway bridge. Surely you say to yourself nobody *lives* there. But you go and look just the same and you find—no less than 48 occupied houses, two solid rows of 24 each. Living on the job with a vengeance! Fortunately, with practice one can soon visit five or six possible “halts” without stopping, memorizing the relevant details, then pulling up to make notes. Soon one focuses only road surfaces, obstructions, signposts, the other features of the countryside becoming an unimportant blur.

When one is satisfied that the area covered by a route has been thoroughly explored, then the “halts” which remain should be arranged in the order in which they are to be visited, and the route should be gone over, if possible, in the same van which will be used, allowing appropriate time at each “halt” and setting down precise details of the route to be followed. When timing it is necessary to give a fair degree of latitude throughout, to anticipate difficult weather and other unforeseen contingencies. Timing may result in the need for more pruning, the “halts” to be cut off being added to another adjacent route. This process may be repeated too often, of course, and for this reason it is best to do first the routes which are likely to prove longest. The preliminary exploration can be done more quickly and with less strain in a car or light van rather than in the actual vehicle, but if done unimaginatively this may result in embarrassment for the



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driver of the travelling library ; this is not so serious, however, if discovered when the provisional timing is done.

The completed job is a neat schedule of "halts" and times, satisfactory at least on paper. When the service is actually introduced and the potential borrowers have been canvassed it may be found that some "halts" are hardly worth-while, while others deserve more time than has been allowed. At all events the opportunity to use the library service on a personal basis will have been presented to every household in the area, and the points at which a permanent service needs creating or strengthening will have been revealed.

### Students' Problems

A. J. WALFORD

FINAL: Bibliography and Book Selection.

*First Paper.* Any terrors which this paper may have presented were reduced by the absence of obligatory sections. Thus, the first three questions, on typography, photographic reproduction, and so forth, could have been avoided by the candidate whose forte was enumerative bibliography—but he would have to have known his subject thoroughly.

Q.1, on the relationship between paper size, format, page size, and type size, was an interesting and probing one. The four terms in Q.2 were less obviously connected, and I have yet to find a candidate who was confident regarding "bill of type." It is usually termed "bill of fount." Legros and Grant's *Typographical Printing Surfaces* (1916) has, Mr. Collison informs me, a number of pages (pp. 126-43) on bills of type covering several languages, but the ordinary text-book will not prove very informative.

For the rest, this paper was unexceptionable and it was good to find two questions devoted to bibliographical aids. These queries have usually been the perquisite of Registration: Assistance to Readers; they should most certainly figure here as well. Q.9 asked where one would look for information on five topics. The following are my first reactions; there are plenty of alternatives:—

Exchequer rolls: *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th ed. for preference); or, the *N.E.D.*; under "Tally" in each case.

Invention and early history of celluloid: *Thorpe's Dictionary*.

Illustration of an early musical instrument: *Oxford Companion to Music* (Grove and Thompson are here both at a discount).

Weight per foot of railway line: *Kempe's Engineer's Year Book*.

Standing wording of a simple will: *Whitaker's Almanack*.

Q.10 was more searching, especially as it was not clear if exhaustive research or merely a good flying start were required. Presumably the latter. A few sources are indicated below, it being assumed that Besterman and the B.M. current *General Catalogue* are out of court (although they should certainly be mentioned in passing):—

Bibliography of Thomas Hardy: Bateson; *Annual Bibliography of the English Language and Literature*, *Who was Who*; and for good measure—Kunitz, Baker, Riches.

Bibliography of Lord Lister: Garrison and Morton; *D.N.B.*; *Quarterly*

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*Cumulative Index Medicus*; J. L. Thornton's new *Medical Books, Libraries and Collectors*.

Bibliography of Bermuda: *Statesman's Year Book*; Royal Empire Society *Catalogue* (v.3); B.M. *Subject Index*; London Library *Subject Index*; Colonial Office lists; and, for periodical articles, P.A.I.S., etc.

Two questions dealt with arrangement in bibliographies. English topography was the subject in Q.4, and those who have thumbed Humphreys' *Handbook* or the new volume by E. G. Cox should have had plenty of examples to hand. It will be noted that there were three queries to be answered in this question. Arrangement of author bibliographies (Q.6) is adequately treated in Esdaile.

The main requirements of an index to periodicals (Q.8) are, I suppose, frequency of publication, specific entry, adequate cross-reference and allowance for locality, and bibliographical data (showing presence of maps, illustrations, bibliographies). No doubt the question on a binding policy for a medium-sized reference library was popular. It should have presented no difficulties, provided that one remembered type of material (replacement v. binding enters here), the use to which it is put, and such matters as the local collection, periodicals and newspapers. Q.7 was a Registration question and no Finalist should have disgraced himself by failing to shine in answering it.

*Second Paper.* This requiring careful attention; it was definitely a Final paper, requiring practical experience.

To select the initial stock of a small general reference library, it is unwise to push Mudge and Minto. The 250-volume "core" collection listed in Shores and Munford's pamphlet on *Reference Books* are much more to the point. Book reviews in periodicals formed a worthy question (Q.2). Staff book selection, the burden of Q.3, is dealt with in Bonny. In Q.5 was revived an old friend: periodicals of value in the selection of current French books. It is obviously necessary to distinguish between the exhaustive or fairly full list, such as *Biblio* or *Les Livres du Mois*, and the selective, evaluative aids of the type of *Paru*, *Bulletin critique du Livre Française*, *Mercure de France*, and *Revue de Paris*.

Q.4 called for a working knowledge of book selection. It ran as follows: "If you were responsible for book selection in a special field, how would you find information on publications not mentioned in the normal book-trade journals? Briefly evaluate any sources your suggest." Special periodicals, accession lists or catalogues of libraries in that field, buying lists (e.g., Lewis's), publisher's catalogues, second-hand catalogues; expert advice—these are some of the sources. Government, foreign and society publications are further problems involved.

Other practical matters were dealt with in Q.7 (general v. specialised law book-buying) and Q.9 (temporary v. permanent filing of periodicals). Possessors of the *Guide to the Collections* should have had no trouble in answering Q.10, on the principal sources of official statistics; and Q.8, on the B.N.B., was a gift.

FINAL: Library Organization and Administration. By F. N. McDonald.

*First Paper—General.* Several factors contributed towards making this

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probably the most difficult paper ever set in general librarianship. Not the least was the uncertainty of the shape the paper would take under the new syllabus. We now know the worst. Four questions had to be attempted out of six set and this meant that candidates had to answer at greater length than hitherto, providing either more details of description or extending their arguments. This ratio of answers to questions set reduces the margin of choice and at the same time makes it less easy to tackle an answer on imperfectly remembered facts. The lesson to be learnt is quite plain. The syllabus is not extensive; everything must be learnt thoroughly. Whether it is right that the examination should be so searching on matters which are not of great practical importance is debatable, but students are obliged to accept the situation as it is.

After a question dealing with an aspect of the history of the Bibliothèque Nationale, the answer to which may be found in Esdaile's *National libraries*, the paper goes on to ask, "Compare and contrast the general organisation of the Library Association with that of any foreign or Dominion library association." The distinguishing features of the Library Association are that its membership is not restricted to professional librarians, it has certain rights and duties conferred upon it by its Royal Charter, it holds examinations and grants a diploma, and its organisation into branches and sections gives every member a reasonable chance to take part in its activities according to both his geographical location and also the type of library work he does. No other association is quite so representative. Nevertheless a glance at the correspondence columns of library periodicals shows that not everyone is satisfied with the present set-up. The existence of Aslib and the School Library Association as separate bodies and the dissatisfaction of the University and Research Section are regrettable. This question gave a good opportunity for some constructive criticism.

The next question asks for the advantages and disadvantages of the N.C.L.'s becoming a "copyright" library. The granting of this privilege would have to be accompanied by different regulations from those governing other copyright libraries. The N.C.L. has no place in the preservation of literature, nor is it desirable that it should build up large stocks of books easily available elsewhere. Books for deposit would have to be selected rigorously, and powers to lend them and discard them when obsolete granted. It is well-known that, even with all the voluntary schemes of co-operation, libraries are still finding it impossible to obtain all the books required for their readers. Any scheme which would help to improve the situation is desirable. If by making the N.C.L. a copyright library such improvement were brought about then it would be a good thing, but on the whole, having regard to the very specialised needs of inter-library loans it might be preferable to increase the book fund of the N.C.L., enabling it to buy multiple copies of books where necessary.

Q.4 gave the alternative of an essay on either the library of an Oxford or Cambridge College or the history of libraries of the Benedictine Order in England prior to the Dissolution. This was followed by something more interesting. "On the whole librarians in Britain have stuck to the plain, simple—but not necessarily easy—job of trying to provide people with the books they want. They have been concerned, not so much to stimulate

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demand, especially demand in particular directions, as to provide resources and opportunities (a) Is this true? (b) Is it a policy which should be followed in the future?"

It is true up to a point and it is a policy to be followed with limitations. There is no space to develop an argument here, but librarians as a whole have had to discriminate between various wants and have tried most to provide for those wants which they considered worthwhile. Such stimulation of demand as has taken place, in public libraries at any rate, has been in support of informative or thought-provoking books. At least we like to think that that has been the case.

The final question was on the present state of regional library co-operation in Britain and what can be done to improve it.

*Second Paper (a) Public Libraries.* The paper was divided into four sections, with two questions in each, one of which had to be answered. Section A contained questions on law, neither of which was very difficult. A pamphlet on the present unsatisfactory state of legislation in Scotland was issued by the Scottish Library Association in 1946 and reprinted in the L.A. Record for July of that year. This should provide a basis for the answer to the first of these questions.

Section B had a question dealing with the situation created by increases in the prices charged for book binding. There are various courses of action open to libraries. They may set up local binderies as has recently been done at Tottenham, bind less, use some of the cheaper methods of binding now available, or increase the binding vote. Mr. Cranshaw's paper at the Scarborough Conference shows that home binderies can be an economic proposition. Bristol has been able, using "perfect" style binding, to reduce costs to less than that of commercial binderies. Few libraries have the space to install such binderies and most will have to explore the other alternatives. With regard to the proposition of binding less, the responsible officer must consider whether it would, on the whole, be cheaper to buy a new copy of a book than to have the old one rebound. Books in publishers' bindings look better on the shelves than those in library bindings. This policy, together with use of "perfect" binding, where appropriate, would keep the estimate for rebinding within reasonable limits.

The other question in this section dealt with the main developments in the architecture and planning of branch libraries since 1900. The successive editions of Brown's *Manual* should show these developments, though any assistant in a big town which has opened new branches at intervals during this period knows the answer from observation. Incidentally, the Centenary brochure recently issued by Liverpool shows clearly the changing face of library architecture.

The first question in Section C concerned the L.A. Centenary Assessment pamphlet, and asked what steps should be taken as a consequence of its publication. Many library authorities set up sub-committees to consider reports on their own systems in the light of the pamphlet and a perusal of the centenary news columns in the L.A. Record shows that some good results have accrued. Croydon produced an inter-leaved edition, for local use, showing on the duplicated pages which had been inserted facts and statistics

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relating to its own system.

The second question was "Discuss the potential impact of the B.N.B. on public library administration." The B.N.B. can be used in a variety of ways; as a guide to correct entries and classifications, cut up and pasted on cards or in guard books as actual entries, as a guide to book selection and even, after mounting entries on cards, as order slips, when filed in Easibind cases as a bibliography for use in public departments and finally as a basis for co-operative buying in stock specialisation schemes. Its effect should be to improve the standard of cataloguing in British libraries which we are told is deplorably low, and it might render centralised card cataloguing unnecessary.

The final section gives a choice between two propositions for discussion. "Public library administration cannot be taught in a classroom nor can it be tested by written examination." This is true, but a born administrator would be a better librarian after the preparative study for this examination. The best and perhaps the only way to acquire administrative ability is by observing the work of those who have it.

Lastly, "Sound public library technique must in the long run be based on an understanding of public library purpose." This is also true, but the difficulty lies in the fact that there is no agreement as to what is the purpose of public libraries; hence the current interest in finding a philosophy of librarianship. Until such agreement is reached each librarian in adopting a particular technique must have a clear idea of how it fits in with his own conception of library purpose, otherwise there is likely to be a dissipation of energy.

On the whole a fair paper.

### Outcrop V

R. L. COLLISON

ALL READERS of OUTCROP will welcome Mr. and Mrs. Locke's courageous new venture, *Library Science Abstracts*, details of which were issued with the March number of the *Library Association Record*. The first two issues maintain a very high standard throughout and, although the production is undistinguished, this publication has already proved itself an essential item in any library which desires to keep in touch with current developments throughout the world.

Students of library architecture will be interested in "The sky line: the genteel and the genuine," by Lewis Mumford (*New Yorker*, July 9, 1949, pages 43-46) points out Mr. Harold Smith, student at the Princeton Street Library School. Surveying New York's public library buildings, Mumford says, "When an honest library building using thoroughly modern forms is erected that's still news, for the genteel tradition in architecture continues to lay its heaviest hand on libraries and universities." The central criticism of his article, in which he analyses the structural features of buildings erected in 1899, 1903 and 1942, is that whereas the older buildings "the Carnegie libraries . . . deserve respectful consideration . . . for they are easily identifiable as public buildings;" in the Harlem Branch built in 1942, for all its technical superiority whereby "it is possible

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to read without artificial light as far as fifty feet back from the windows," yet it "has lost a quality that was worth preserving, for outwardly it is hard to identify it as a library . . . It might be a school, it might be a health center or a laboratory . . . The cold bluff brick of the façade arbitrarily allies it with a factory. Functionally, this library is a great improvement on the earlier types, and a worthy example of contemporary form. But it has not mastered the question of outward expression . . . Once again we are faced with the problem . . . of combining monumentalism with symbolism, which in this case is the problem of making a library building even more like a library than the Carnegie libraries do."

An interesting contrast to Mumford's theories is provided by two articles in the *Architectural Review*: "By Hawksmoor out of Gibbs," by S. Lang (Apr. 1949, pages 183-190) describes the building of the Radcliffe Library, and F. Hepner gives some interesting information—and some amazing illustrations—of "Libraries of the baroque in Bavaria and Austria" (Apr. 1950, pages 255-260).

The reopening of the Wellcome Historical Medical Library on 2nd December is described in both the *Lancet* (Dec. 10, 1949, page 1100) and *Nature* (Dec. 10, 1949, page 990) writes Mr. Paul Ninnes, Reference Librarian, Exeter. Substantially the same report is given in both of the growth and resources of this centre of medical and historical research, the *Lancet's* description being slightly more detailed.

"A librarian who reads is lost," misquotes Mr. W. H. Phillips, Deputy Librarian, Islington, drawing attention to the profile of Mao Tse-Tung in the *Observer* (Feb. 26, 1950), where we learn that at the age of twenty-five "he got a job as an assistant at the National Library. He was paid almost nothing, but he could read what he liked, and it was here that he attained his own peculiar kind of maturity. In the two years that he spent at the library, 1918-20, Mao discovered the powerful teachings of Karl Marx."

Pages 182-187 of *Sweet Shop Success* (Pitman, 1950), says our Hon. Secretary, Mr. E. A. Clough, give advice on how to run a commercial library and, under the heading "Library service" we read, "if you have literary opinions keep them to yourself. Assistants with advanced bookish ideas must also be schooled into acknowledging that the literary tastes of customers are perfect."

In the *British Journal Photographic Almanac*, 1950 (pages 370-374) appears a useful section on document copying, including microcopying. Students who are interested in such items as contact or reflex copying will find the information here both clear and straightforward.

Some of the smaller municipal libraries in Norway receive a government grant, says the article on "Libraries and Archives" in the *Norway Year Book*, 1950 (pages 165-170), which describes both state and municipal library systems, including the "ambulatory libraries" and "book automobiles."

It is not the custom in OUTCROP to mention items in professional journals: nevertheless, we break our rule to point out that the appearance of Fremont Rider's new book on *Compact Book Storage* adds interest to his

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article on "Warehouse or 'Microcard'?" (*Library Journal*, May 15 and June 1, 1950, pages 832-36 and 927-31) in which there is a very handy table of comparison of costs of book versus microcard storage.

Mr. H. F. Steele, Islington Reference Library, draws attention to two articles on music by Lionel R. McColvin in the current edition of *Who's who in Music*, 1949/50 (Shaw Publishing Co.), the first on "Gramophone records in public libraries" (pages lxxxv-lxxxviii) and the other on the Central Music Library (pages lviii-lix). The former includes a short list of libraries possessing collections of records, and the latter describes clearly the origins and function of this valuable addition to library co-operation in Britain.

Mr. Owen Keen, Central Reference Library, Westminster, points out that an example of the application of electronics to the reproduction of illustrations is to be seen in the *Wireless World* (Jan. 1950, page 10). The illustration shows a small American machine which can produce a plastic half-tone block direct from the original print in about six minutes. Very few of the details of working are given, but the principle is that the photograph to be reproduced is scanned by a photo-electric cell, and its output is amplified and made to vary the heat of an electric stylus according to the tone values of the photograph. The stylus engraves a plastic sheet mounted on a revolving cylinder similar to that on which the original print is mounted. One imagines that the result is equivalent to a coarse-screen half-tone, and so most suited to newspaper work where rapid processing is important. The September, 1949, number of *Electronics* (pages 122 onwards) contains an illustrated description of the Bush rapid selector, and there is also an article on this application of electronics to microfilm in the May, 1949, number of the *Scientific American* (pages 26-27).

In the University of the State of New York's *Bulletin to the Schools* (May, 1949), writes Mr. J. C. Harrison, Lecturer-in-Charge, Manchester School of Librarianship, it is reported that the State Education Building at Albany has been fitted with an Electronic Pigeon Evictor!

### Letters from Members

#### DESCRIPTION.

Mr. J. C. Haywood, F.L.A., *Deputy City Librarian, Worcester*, writes:—

"In his review of *The A.A.L. guide to professional examinations. Volume 1*, in the August-September *Library Assistant*, Mr. Hutchings states, 'The meaning of 'description' is in doubt; but it is generally understood to include collation. It is a term to be avoided.'

"Both as to the doubtfulness of the meaning and the desirability of avoiding such an ambiguous term I am in entire agreement, especially as no two cataloguing textbooks that I have consulted give it the same meaning, while many of the best authorities, including the A.A. Code, avoid it.

"Unfortunately the Entrance syllabus printed in the *Students' Handbook* 1950, states, 'In cataloguing candidates will be expected to understand . . . the meaning of description'.



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"In face of such confusion among the experts it is not surprising that failures in the Entrance Examination appear to be increasing. Perhaps Mr. Hutchings will use his influence with the Education Committee of the L.A. to have the syllabus amended. In the meantime, *The Library Assistant* would do a great service to students and tutors by printing a definition of 'description' likely to be acceptable to the examiners."

### **Books for Students**

Collison, Robert L., *The cataloguing, arrangement and filing of special material in special libraries*. 1950. (Aslib, 9s. 6d.).

Public library assistants should not be misled by the title of this book, which should be of real value to all those engaged in study for either the cataloguing or administration sections of the Registration and Final examinations. The scope of the work is best indicated by the chapter headings—General principles; Illustrative materials (the "picture" or "illustration" collection of the public library); Lantern slides; News clippings and indexes; Microfilms; Gramophone records; Trade catalogues; Maps; Films. The entire book has an authoritative ring, possibly explained by the acknowledgments to various special librarians made by Mr. Collison in the preface. Most chapters include references for further reading.

Much of the information may not be new, but there is no similar textbook which brings together information on all these media that are invading public and special library alike. Those who feel that three books on aspects of librarianship from the same pen within a year means duplication or hasty and slipshod writing will find little to support that theory here.

There are one or two points of criticism, of which the most important is that of price. There are about 50 pages of text in the book's 76 pages, and many excellent illustrations take most of the remaining space, but 9s. 6d. seems excessive for such a slim volume. On page 22, Mr. Collison mentions Mr. Gaitskell by name as Minister of Fuel and Power, which tends to date the book unnecessarily. When discussing the cataloguing of gramophone records on page 35, the author writes of "the new type which is double the size of the usual 12-inch record and is played at the slow speed of 33 revs. per minute [an ugly abbreviation] . . ." This suggests that the new LP records are 24-inch discs, which is incorrect. Neither do they play twice as long as a normal record, but approximately four to five times, owing to the use of the microgroove. There are two subsequent editions to the 1936 Gramophone Shop *Encyclopedia*, not one (p. 43), and none of the three editions should be discarded. A similar but more comprehensive catalogue is at present in course of preparation in this country. These are minor flaws only; the book should be in every library's staff collection, and should be read by all interested in the problems presented by these new sources of information.

E.T.B.